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## Latino Professionals' Views on Employment Discrimination Towards the Latino Immigrant Community

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# Latino Professionals' Views on Employment Discrimination Towards the Latino Immigrant Community

by

Anali Crispin Ballesteros, B.S.W.

MSW Clinical Research Paper

Presented to the Faculty of the  
School of Social Work  
Saint Catherine University and the University of Saint Thomas  
Saint Paul, Minnesota  
in Partial fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Social Work

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The Clinical Research Project is a graduation requirement for MSW students at St. Catherine University/University of St. Thomas School of Social Work in St. Paul, Minnesota and is conducted within a nine-month time frame to demonstrate facility with basic social research methods. Students must independently conceptualize a research problem, formulate a research design that is approved by a research committee and the university Institutional Review Board, implement the project, and publicly present the findings of the study. This project is neither a Master's thesis nor a dissertation.

### **Abstract**

The purpose of this research study was to identify the causes and negative effects of employment discrimination towards Latino immigrants. Using a qualitative design the researcher interviewed nine Latino professionals on their views of employment discrimination towards Latino immigrants. Additionally, the participants have worked with the Latino immigrant community, have experienced employment discrimination themselves or know Latino immigrants who have experienced employment discrimination. The researcher analyzed data by looking for themes. Themes have been noted and compared to the literature review that has been collected on this topic. Transcripts were analyzed and reviewed to ensure validity and credibility. The findings indicated that eight out of nine participants believed that employment discrimination towards Latino immigrants still exists today. Participants discussed how employment discrimination is a form of injustice that prevents Latino immigrants from getting access to equal employment opportunities. The findings of the study also demonstrated a need for future research. The researcher encourages future research to conduct a study on the positive outcomes that may result from educating Latino immigrants about U.S. labor laws.

### **Acknowledgments**

I would like to thank my research chair, Dr. Karen Carlson, as well as my committee members, Arlette Cuevas and Susan Schmidt. Your availability, guidance, productive feedback and insights about employment discrimination toward the Latino-Hispanic immigrant community assisted me through this rewarding educational experience. I would like to thank my family for their unconditional love, support and encouragement through this rewarding process. Thank you for believing in me.

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## **Introduction**

Latinos-Hispanics in the workforce are rarely studied, yet they are the fastest growing minority, according to the recent U.S. Census Bureau reports. Approximately 35.5 million Hispanics currently live in the U.S. and census projections underscore the critical importance of understanding and researching this labor group within the context of organization whereby Hispanics will account for 30% of the total United States population by 2050 (Del Campo, Rogers & Jacobson 2010). Employment discrimination prevents members of the Latino community from finding and maintaining a job. In other words, it creates obstacles that are difficult to overcome, such as, economic disparities, unemployment, unsafe work conditions, unfair treatment, and no job advancement opportunities. In fact, unemployment among Latinos for both sexes including teenagers is higher than Caucasians. Each job not held by a Latino immigrant is potentially available for a white individual (Farley, 1987).

Unfortunately, employers appear to use different evaluation standards for white and minority group applicants. They seem to allow a bit more flexibility in their evaluation of white applicants and maintain stricter standards in the evaluation of minority groups. Research indicates that African American and Latinos are less favorably evaluated and less valued by firms, which limits levels of perceived job security (Hite, 2007). This unethical behavior results in unequal treatment of groups protected under Title VII (Bandsuch, 2009).

Furthermore, employers are influenced by stigma and stereotypes towards the Latino immigrant community in the hiring process. They make assumptions that Latino immigrants are unskilled and don't have a good work ethic. Because of these assumptions, employers tend to have low expectations for the Latino applicants or current Latino employees. There is evidence

that today, stereotypes do exist and that employers often act upon them (Contreras and Romero, 2009). When employees are valued by their employer, they are more likely to perform an outstanding job, which will increase the productivity of the organization.

The focus of this qualitative project was to examine how Latino professionals view employment discrimination towards the Latino immigrant community. The following literature review will illustrate that Latino immigrants have a greater probability of experiencing employment discrimination than Caucasians. Additionally, the findings about employment discrimination can serve for future methods and interventions that can help to decrease employment discrimination. The findings from this study indicate that employment discrimination towards the Latino immigrant community still exists in today's society.

The central question of this research is How do Latino professionals view employment discrimination towards the Latino immigrant community? Within this larger question the researcher also explores definitions and examples of employment discrimination as well as the effects of discrimination on immigrants and their communities.

## **Literature Review**

### **What does the term Latino and Hispanic mean?**

The National Council of La Raza (n.d) defines Latino and Hispanic as, "The term Latino and Hispanic are used interchangeably by the U.S. Census Bureau to refer to persons of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central and South American, Dominican and other Hispanic descent" For the purposes of this paper the terms Latino and Hispanic will be used interchangeably.

## **The Complexity of Racial Attitudes in the United States**

Research indicates that racism leads to discriminatory practices. According to Morris & Williams (2000), “We use the term racism to refer to an organized system that leads to the subjugation of some human population groups relative to others. Fundamental to the development of such system is an ideology of inferiority in which human population groups are categorized and ranked with some being inferior to others” (p. 244). Racism leads to the development of negative attitudes and beliefs towards racial groups. Also, studies of prejudice indicate that institutional authorities can either encourage or discourage hate crimes (Levin, 2002, as cited by Campisi, Maney, Melendez & Valenzuela, 2007). Unfortunately, prejudice based on racial cultural, or ethnic differences is one of the most relevant types of prejudice (Gonzales, Ibanes & Ubillos, 2009). Research indicates that there are two forms of prejudice, the *Blatant prejudice* and *Subtle prejudice*. Pettigrew & Meertens (1995) (as cited in Gonzales, Ibanez & Ubillos, 2009) define *Blatant prejudice* as “*Blatant prejudice* is an expression of racism in which there is a shared belief in superiority of one group over another, and that certain people are dangerous for one’s society. They are not “the same” as us, and so perceived as threat” (p.1691). These authors also define *Subtle prejudice* as “*Subtle prejudice* includes cognitive, emotional, and affective style items that look into the positive emotions expressed toward the out-group as it is of not showing positive emotions toward them” (p.1691). People in this category deny discrimination and are more likely to believe that minorities do not suffer from negative differential treatment in society (Gonzales, Ibanez & Ubillos 2009). In addition a study conducted by Briñol et al., (2014) about prejudice attitudes towards South American immigrants, indicates that prejudice attitudes towards immigrants can be reduced through persuasive messages.



### **Immigrant Community: Discrimination Mostly as a Result of an Accent**

Immigrants are often known as the Invisible Minority (IM) group. According to Akomolafe (2013), “IMs come to the United States from all parts of the world in search of a piece of the American dream. Although for the most part they fulfill their civic obligations like every other citizen, however, they are victims of the most egregious, albeit subtle form of discrimination mostly as a result of their foreign accent” (p. 8). Further, research indicates that immigrants encounter accent discrimination in the workforce, which prevents them from economic advancement and job advancement opportunities. As a result, immigrants fear that if they don’t speak like a native-born American, they will encounter difficulties in finding a stable job. For instance, a 48 year-old Dominican woman enrolled in an accent-elimination class after her managers complained that they could not understand her because of her accent. The woman suspected that the criticism was a pretext to keep her from being promoted to a higher position and shared that a speech evaluation clinic found her accent was easy to understand (Nguyen, 1993).

Additionally, accents can be classified as standard or nonstandard in a particular community. (Fishman, 1971, as cited by Cargile, 2000) state that, “A standard variety is that most often associated with status, the media, and power, whereas a non-standard variety is one that is often associated with a lower level of socioeconomic success” (p. 166). Standard accents are rated highly on traits related to competence and intelligence. Individuals in the standard category are perceived as competent and skillful. As a result, they tend to have more job opportunities than individuals with a nonstandard accent. Additionally, individuals who have a non-standard accent are often viewed as incompetent and are evaluated less favorably by people

with a non-standard accent and standard accent (Cargile, 2000). Further, researchers found that San Antonio area employers were biased when hiring for supervisors and made identical judgment of Spanish accented speakers; standard American English speakers were more likely to be hired for a supervisory position, whereas Spanish accented speakers were more likely to be hired for a semiskilled position (De la Zerda & Hooper, 1979, as cited by Cargile, 2000). Unfortunately, there is a lack of research about accent discrimination towards Latino immigrants. The studies completed about this particular topic were conducted several years ago.

### **Geographic Separation: High Unemployment Rates**

Research from Farley (1987) indicates that racial segregation appears to be a factor that contributes to disproportionate unemployment rate for Hispanic as well as Black males. It is found that Hispanic male unemployment is higher relative to that of Caucasians where jobs are most suburbanized and the minority populations least so. A study conducted by Farley (1987) indicates that, "The findings also suggest that there may be less deliberate job discrimination against Hispanic than against Blacks. However, Hispanics, like Blacks, suffer an unemployment disadvantage when they are concentrated in the central city while jobs flee to the suburbs" (p. 148). This means that Caucasians have more job opportunities in the suburbs because they are more likely than minorities to live in the suburbs. Data indicates that 48% of whites live in the suburbs, while 23.3% of Blacks and 37.3% Hispanics live in the suburbs (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1982:15, as cited by Farley, 1987). Research indicates that cities with large numbers of immigrants are characterized by significant lower wages among immigrants (Dixon & Stewart, 2010).

In addition, data indicates that that during the 1950s and 1960s white individuals dominated suburban areas. As a result, minorities were more likely to live in larger cities. However, data illustrates that suburbs have become more diverse and will be more diverse in the years to come. According to Frey (2014), “Hispanic, Asian, blacks and other groups are becoming primary engines of growth in the nation’s suburbs in the area when the aging white population will be barely holding its own” (p.6). This author also reports that as suburbs become more diverse, communities, leaders and policy makers will be pressured to learn about different cultures.

### **The Impact of Skin Color on Occupational Status/Economic Status/ Hiring process**

According to Franz and Espino (2002), “Building on previous research, we hypothesize that darker-skinned Puerto Ricans, Cuban American and Mexican Americans will have lower occupational prestige scores, and by implication face more labor market discrimination than their lighter-skinned counterparts” (p.614). Specifically, analysts found that the areas of Texas and Los Angeles (areas with large Mexican population) had higher levels of employment discrimination against Latino than did New York City (Espino & Franz, 2002). This data indicates that there are cities that discriminate against Latinos more than other cities. Also, Latinos with lighter skin color who have not experienced discrimination will be more likely to self-identify as white; Latinos with darker skin color who have experienced discrimination will be more likely to identify as Black. These individual will not self-identify as Latinos (Frank, Lu & Redstone, 2010). Additionally, white men are advantaged in obtaining good jobs because of their ties to other groups of white men in upper levels of companies (Dobbin, Kalev, & Kelly, 2006).

Bansak and Raphael (2001) report on a study conducted by the Government Accounting Office (GAO, 1990) that found “a substantial minority of employers engage in illegal discriminatory practices such as only examining the documents of applicants who are foreign looking or not hiring applicants with a foreign appearance...” (p.227). The results from their research indicates that Latino job applicants were more likely to be treated unfavorably in the application process than non-Latino white members and received fewer job offers.

A study conducted by Mason (2004) indicates that there is a sizeable penalty for having a dark/ Indian phenotype. Persons of Mexican descent (PMD) with a dark complexion and Indian features earn \$921 less annual income than light- and medium complexioned PMD's with European features. In studying both annual income and hourly wages Mason (2004) says:

These regressions also demonstrate the importance of skin color among Mexican-American. Among the native-born, very light-skin color Mexican-Americans earn \$4065 more than medium-skin-color Mexican-Americans. Among immigrants, dark individuals earn \$2285 less than medium-skin-shade persons (p.828).

Mason (2004) continues:

A Spanish or color racial identity tends to lower annual income and hourly wages relative to white self-identification. For example, Spanish and color racial identity lower hourly wages by 18 and 15 percent, respectively, for native-born males, whereas Spanish racial identity lowers hourly wages by 12 to 41 percent for immigrant men and women, respectively. Spanish racial identity lowers annual income for immigrant males by \$3029 (p.830).

### **Stereotypes/Bias/ Prejudices May Evolve Rather than Disappear**

Bias can be defined as the negative evaluation of one group and its members relative to another. Such an evaluation can be expressed explicitly (e.g., “I don’t want to work with Latinos”). Data indicates that unconscious and implicit bias is an issue that affects every person and every organization, no matter how inclusive people think they may be (Ross, 2014). Research also indicates that stereotypes unconsciously influence the way hiring managers evaluate immigrant job applicants. As a result, hiring managers make their decisions based on the applicants’ foreign appearance rather than the applicants’ skills and abilities. For example, when the company said the job vacancy was already filled, was that an excuse? Some immigrant job applicants don’t follow up and never find out the reason why they were not hired for that particular job (Bendick & Nunes 2012).

According to Contreras and Romero (2009), “Even though there may be a number of reasons that Hispanics are employed in low level positions in the U.S., it may be the case that attitudinal biases and unfair discrimination are part of the problem” (p.106). Employers find themselves making poor and incorrect assumptions based on their biases towards the Hispanic community, which prevents them from having diverse staff members. Social psychologists trace inequality to bias among managers (Dobbin, Kalev & Kelly, 2006). Research indicates that racial minority groups in the United States continue to encounter racial stereotypes and prejudices (Stewart & Dixon, 2010). For example, Latina teachers who reported discrimination felt they were negatively affected by Latina stereotypes and that they needed to “prove” themselves more. Latina teachers said they felt out of place and some even suffered social exclusion or isolated themselves due to work conflicts (Flores, 2011). This example indicates that stereotypes can

cause social exclusion.

Hispanics also experience reoccurring problems gaining and maintaining employment. For instance, they are often given low-level jobs in organizations, and receive lower salary levels than a majority group member. Biases and stereotypes lead to unfair discrimination, which may prevent individuals and organizations from achieving their goals. Additionally, studies indicate that individuals pay more attention to information from stereotyped groups (Bendick & Nunes, 2012).

According to Moore (2011), "The universality of stereotyping as a cognitive process and the uniformly negative character of racial stereotypes suggest not only that employers are likely to discriminate against racial minorities but also that they are more likely to do so when hiring than at other stages of the employment relationship" (p.915) This author also indicates that hiring discrimination is harder to document than discriminatory promotion or dismissal decisions.

### **Race and Ethnic Group Differences in Reemployment Rates**

The reemployment rates of minority workers are significantly lower than the white reemployment rates among both men and women. The higher rate of minority unemployment indicates that this is a population that encounters more barriers than whites in finding a job. (Moore, 2011). Further, Moore's study indicates that the odds of reemployment are 44% lower for unmarried black men and 14% lower for unmarried Hispanic men than for unmarried white men. Black and Hispanic males are less likely than whites to be reemployed, regardless of marital status. Further, a study conducted by Ong (1991) indicates that minorities were less likely to be rehired after a layoff and more likely to be displaced than other ethnic groups. Often times, these individuals earn lower wages than their previous jobs.

### **Employers Tend to Hire Caucasians versus Latino Immigrant applicants/ Wages**

Research indicates that employers tend to choose workers with whom they identify or whom they regard as familiar. Under these conditions Bonikowski, Pager & Western (2005) generally expect white non-college job seekers to have large advantages over their African American and Latino counterparts. This information indicates that whites are systematically preferred to minorities. As a result, minorities with identical skills as white applicants are denied job opportunities. These authors' study also indicates that, "Employers appeared to see more potential qualification of white applicants, and they more commonly viewed white applicants as a better fit for more desirable jobs" (p. 793). Immigrants are often disadvantaged in gaining access to jobs for which they are educationally qualified and earn less than their white counterparts because they are more likely to be subject to work discrimination (De Jong & Madamba, 2011). Research points to racial discrimination as a persistent source of labor market disadvantages for racial and ethnic minorities. Audit studies show that when applying for jobs, African American and Hispanics are less likely than whites to receive an interview or job offer (Hursh & Lyons, 2010). In addition, Latinos do not have the opportunity to advance their career to supervisory positions or any other higher position because employers are influenced by negative stereotypes. A study conducted by Mossakowski & Wilson (2012) indicates that African American and Latinos are less favorably evaluated and less meaningful to firms, both of which limit levels of perceived job security.

### **Employment Discrimination Can Potentially Affect Latinos' Mental Health**

Research indicates that Latino men who often experience discrimination and limited opportunities may experience mental health issues. For example, studies on the mental health of

Latino farmworkers have constantly found that this is a socially and marginalized population with heightened risk for poor psychological health (Negi, 2013). This author also shares that ethnographic studies indicate that suffering, sadness, and feelings of hopelessness are salient.

In addition, previous data indicates that racism can potentially lead to employment discrimination and mental health issues. As a result, individuals who experience employment discrimination may be negatively impacted. According to Hamit et al., (2014), "Racism has been linked to problems such as substance abuse, lower self-concept, mental distress, and depressive symptoms. It is clear that when individuals perceive and experience discrimination in their personal lives, there may be detrimental impacts on their identity development and mental health." Additionally, data indicates that Latinos may encounter difficulties in securing adequate employment due to discrimination, which places them at a greater risk for depression (LaChapelle et al., 2014).

### **Inequalities Faced by the Latino Community**

**A Marginalized Population.** The positions of documented Mexican immigrants in the United States Labor markets appear to have grown increasingly marginalized. Documented Latino immigrants in the labor markets have fewer opportunities for improving wages compared to Caucasians or working conditions, especially in the context of a deeper recession.

Documented individuals who have legal rights to work continue to encounter injustices, which prevents them from advancing to a better economic situation (Gentsch & Mashev, 2011). Also, research indicates that African American, Hispanic and women with lower ascriptive status increases the risk of experiencing racial employment discrimination (Hursh & Lyons, 2010). In addition, employers (farm employers) manage workers vulnerabilities to ensure cheap, reliable,



and quiescent laborers. Farmworker exploitation has been more relevant in states that offer farm work. For example, California is a state with a large percentage of Latinos and farm work. Farm employers use the phrase “no one else will do the job” or “I cannot find any local worker.” However, the reality is that farm employers encounter difficulties finding domestic workers that would take the low wages and arduous agricultural jobs (Gray, 2007). Additionally, data shows that employers in the Gulf Coast area did not provide an adequate salary to immigrant workers. These employers did not provide appropriate safety equipment to their employees and paid low wages. As a result of low wages, immigrant employees reported that they could not afford to buy food (Fletcher, Pham, Stover, 2007, as cited by Trujillo, 2006).

**Unsafe work conditions.** Furthermore, Mexican immigrants working in clean up following the Hurricane Katrina and recovery work found themselves physically and symbolically injured by a broader political discourse to “Bring New Orleans Back.” Latino workers believed they were given more dangerous and risky work assignments (Trujillo, 2006). (Brunette, as cited by Trujillo, 2006) says, “Latinos currently have higher and non-fatal occupational injuries than any other ethnic group in the United States and their fatality rate is about 20% higher than the rates for white and black workers” (p. 8). Unfortunately, foreign-born Latinos had a fatal working injury rate of 44% higher than the national rate in 2004 (Trujillo-Pagan, 2006).

**Lack of Job Advancement Opportunities.** A survey with a national representative sample indicates that 81% of African Americans, 60% of Hispanics, and 53% of Asians respondents believed that managerial position would be given to an equally qualified white (Bendick and Nunes, 2012). Spanish origin males will be more likely to encounter employment

discrimination in job positions that involve considerable contact with consumers and white employees (Long, 1977). In addition, the “etiquette of retail relationship” suggests that Spanish workers will be denied access to higher paying managerial occupations involving supervision of whites. As a result, managerial positions will be denied to Hispanics (Siegel, 1965: 49, as cited by Long, 1977). Additionally, data indicates that Latina women are underrepresented in the literature on management and career development. Recent reports indicate that 22.4% of Hispanics hold a managerial position, while 38.6% white women hold a managerial position (Hite, 2007).

### **Diversity in the Workforce**

According to Lopez (2007), “Researchers in the field of cultural diversity believe in the need for training employers, employees, negotiators, administrators, etc., to achieve better understanding of the differences between self and others’ cultural tendencies, to reduce the degree of stereotypical attitudes, to facilitate self-awareness, and to make employees (and managers) work toward the improvement of productivity” (p.16). Additionally, research indicates that the trainer race influences the effectiveness of trainings. Black trainers were perceived more effective than white trainers (Block, C., Koch, S. & Liberman, B., 2011). These authors also indicate that, “The lack of fit between the perceived effectiveness of white trainers on diversity issues and the perceived requirement of the job of being an expert on diversity issues appeared to create bias against white trainers” (p.285).

### **Employers Have Violated the Civil Rights Act and Human Rights Act**

The number of discrimination charges filed with the EEOC was over 75,000 in 2006 (Bandsuch, 2009). In 2006, 27,238 people reported they experienced employment

discrimination based on race (EEOC, 2006, as cited by Bandsuch, 2009). These numbers suggest unequal treatment. For example, employers knowingly or not, often use physical traits that are largely irrelevant to job criteria to determine whether to hire a job applicant or not. Employers use traits, such, as skin color, language and accents to assess the abilities and attitudes of individuals as well as their compatibility with the organization and its values. This unethical behavior results in unequal treatment of groups protected under Title VII (Bandsuch, 2009).

### **Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964**

Title VII prohibits employment discrimination based on race, color, sex and national origin. In addition, EEOC (n.d), indicates “Whether an employee or job applicant’s ancestry is Mexican, Ukrainian, Filipino, Arab, American Indian, or any other nationality, he or she is entitled to the same employment opportunities as anyone else.” U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission enforces the federal prohibition against national origin discrimination in employment under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Some examples of violations covered under Title VII include: Employment decisions, including hiring, firing or layoffs based on national origin, accent discrimination and harassment. Additionally, the laws enforced by EEOC prohibit an employer of other covered entity from using neutral employment policies and practices that have a disproportionately negative effect on applicants or employees of a particular race, religion, color, national origin, or an individual with a disability. Further, EEOC laws indicate that it is illegal for an employer to discriminate against an employee in the payment of wages or employee benefits on the bases or race or nation origin (EEOC, n.d.)

### **Conceptual Framework**

A conceptual framework serves as a guide during the research process. The conceptual framework helps researchers to use various theories, perspectives and approaches that can help to conduct an ethical and effective research. One of the conceptual frameworks used for this study was the Ecological Perspective. The Ecological Perspective assumes a person in environment focus. A concept from the ecological perspective is the *social environment* which includes the types of homes people live, the work they do, the amount of money available and the laws and social rules they live by. This perspective also indicates that individuals are influenced and affected by their environment. Latino immigrants have been negatively affected by the work environment. For example, a work environment where the employer denies employment to Latino applicants creates obstacles for economic growth.

Furthermore, a second concept is *person in-environment*. The person in-environment sees people as constantly interacting with various systems around them. People communicate and interact with others in their environment. Each of these interactions or transactions is active or dynamic. A negative interaction may involve not being hired as a supervisor after working several years in an agency because of skin color or accent. As a result, the Latino employee may increase his/her risk for depression. The third concept is *interdependence* which indicates that individuals are interdependent as they rely on other individuals and groups of individuals in the social or work environment. During this process either party might become negatively impacted. For example, a farmer might hire a Latino immigrant to continue harvesting food; however, the Latino employee may be exposed to a hazardous environment (unsafe work environment). This indicates that the employer is relying on the Latino immigrant employee and negatively impacting the employee by providing unsafe work conditions.

In addition, a third concept is *adaption*. *Adaption* is the capacity to adjust to surrounding

environmental conditions. It implies change. A person must adapt to new conditions and circumstances in order to continue functioning effectively. *Adaption* usually requires energy in the form of effort (Ashman and Hull, 2012). Several employers have not been able to adapt to a diverse work environment. They lack the flexibility and capability of adaption which results in denying equal employment opportunities.

Also, the researcher applied the Grounded Theory to examine collected data. The examination of the collected data allowed the researcher to apply critical thinking skills. According to Padgett (2008), "Grounded theory (GT) has emerged as one of the most well-known approaches in qualitative research since its debut in the late 1960s. Grounded Theory entails inductive coding from the data memo writing to document analytic decisions. Coding allowed researcher to find patterns and to apply a comparative analysis.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design and Purpose**

The focus of this qualitative project was to examine Latino professionals' views and experiences on employment discrimination toward the Latino immigrant community. By learning about the effects and causes of employment discrimination individuals in our society can become aware of this injustice. Additionally, Latino immigrants can increase their ability to recognize what employment discrimination means. For the purpose of this study, qualitative research was conducted. Nine Latino professionals were interviewed. The Latino professionals have worked directly with the Latino immigrant community. They have either experienced employment discrimination themselves or know Latino immigrants who have experienced employment discrimination. The interview, carried out in a semi-structured and flexible format,

lasted approximately 45 minutes and was recorded to ensure accurate content analysis. In order to maintain an investigative research process, the questions were neutral and open-ended (i.e., versus closed-ended, double-barreled, or phrased using the word 'why') in nature guided by the overall research question, and supported by literature related to employment discrimination. Sequencing of the questions was such that the respondent was first asked about clients' demographics and experience working with Latino immigrants (see Appendix B). Then, more specific questions were posed about the barriers that Latino immigrants experience within the process of finding a job, as well as reasons why employers perform discriminatory practices towards the Latino immigrant population, such as, employment discrimination.

### **Measures for Protection of Human Subjects**

Several measures were implemented in gathering data from Latino professionals who have worked with the Latino immigrant population. A research proposal and IRB application forms were submitted to the University of Saint Thomas' Institutional Review Board (IRB) to ensure the protection of the participants' rights and confidentiality. Qualitative data was not collected until formal approval from the IRB. The IRB approval indicated that the researcher proposed an ethical and effective qualitative research. After the IRB approval, the researcher provided a consent form (see Appendix A) to all participants. The consent form included a general information statement about the study, reasons why the participant was selected for the study, the name of the researcher, researcher's advisor, department of affiliation and the purpose of the study.

In addition, if participants agreed to the study they were asked for permission to be part of an audio taped interview. They were informed that the information will not be provided that

will make it possible to identify them in any way. The information that was collected is being kept in a personal locked drawer that no one else has access to. The data collected will be destroyed by June 2015.

### **Data Analysis**

Themes have been noted and compared to the literature review that has been collected on the topic (employment discrimination). Drawing on comparisons and contrast helped the researcher to refer back to the study's question as well as the literature keeping in mind what is known and not known. The transcripts were analyzed and reviewed to ensure the validity and credibility. Based on this process the researcher was able to identify and organize several patterns. Interpretation was applied during the data analysis phase to read into and find meaning from data. Meaning comes from the linkages or interstices as well as building blocks which comprise the themes and sub-themes. Multidisciplinary perspective was applied to offer diverse ideas and framing devices for understanding what is going on (Padgett, 2008).

### **Findings**

Nine interviews were conducted and transcribed. Following the transcript process, coding was completed and themes were identified. The findings section will first present a picture of the participants' experiences working with the Latino immigrant community. Finally, four major themes identified in this research will be presented. The themes consisted of negative stereotypes, hiring process, no job advancement opportunities and low wages with sub-themes of undocumented status, Latino immigrants being viewed as incompetent, skin color, having an

accent, mental health, Latinos' need to prove themselves all the time, diversity trainings, fear to speak up, need to educate Latinos about the labor laws and human rights.

### **Participants' experiences working with the Latino immigrant community**

The nine participants of this study indicated that they have enjoyed working with Latino immigrants because they have a good work ethic. Participants reported that working with Latino immigrants creates a positive work environment where everyone is treated with respect and dignity. A female participant stated, *"I like to work with Latino immigrants because I don't feel isolated, I feel understood. When I work with some Caucasians I feel misunderstood and rejected at times because some of them don't show respect. I wish they would see the importance of having a diverse workforce."* Further, a male participant stated *"The Latino immigrant community is a hard-working community. They have a good work ethic and are always trying their best to perform an outstanding job."* Next a female participant stated, *"I am able to enjoy my experience working with the Latino immigrant community. Because I am of Latino background I am able to utilize my experiences, educational background and bicultural experiences."* A latent analysis was applied to analyze the underlying meaning of the previous statements. Latent analysis refers to an interpretation of underlying or hidden meaning (s) that goes beyond description (Padgett, 2008). Eight participants appeared to be happy as they elaborated on their working experience with the Latino immigrant community and believe that working with Latino immigrants can be a rewarding experience. Their affect was congruent to their happy mood.

### **Negative Stereotypes**



The major theme identified by the researcher was negative stereotypes, which consisted of two sub-themes: Undocumented status and Latino immigrants being viewed as incompetent. Throughout the interviews with Latino professionals, many identified negative stereotypes as a barrier in finding a stable job. A female reported the following statement.

*“There is lot of misinformation out there. Some employers don’t hire Latino immigrants because they make the assumption that everyone is undocumented. However, we know that there are many immigrants who are documented and skilled to uphold a job.”*

A different female participant shared.

*“There is a negative stereotype that all Latinos are undocumented and criminals. Many of my clients get pull over because of their skin color. I have an older son who has dark skin color and got pulled over many times because of his skin color.”*

A male participant reported.

*“Discriminatory practices have been going on forever and it’s the bias, the racism. People make the assumption that we are all undocumented. I remember when I was in college people made the assumption that I was undocumented because of my skin color.”*

A female participant indicated.

*“The biggest problem are the negative stereotypes. A lot of people in the United States may just assume that most Latinos are undocumented or that they are lazy or that they are incompetent.”*

A male participant shared.

*“Unfortunately, some employers assume that we are not intellectual and believe that we are unskilled, which is a wrong assumption because there have been many Latinos poets, inventors and scientists in Latin America: We have competent Latinos here as well. Employers are also surprised when they see a Latino immigrant who speaks English well and has a college degree. They are surprised because they make the assumption that Latino immigrants are not capable of graduating from college.”*

A female participant reported.

*“I attended a workshop on diversity and the speaker said, ‘I used to think that Latinos were lazy’ and all Latino professionals in the presentation were shocked to hear that because the majority of Latinos I know are competent and hard-working individuals.”*

The previous comments illustrate that either conscious or unconscious stereotypes influence how Latino immigrants are perceived and evaluated by employers, which can prevent them from acknowledging the Latino immigrants’ strengths and abilities to perform an outstanding job. Eight participants disagreed with the assumptions that all Latino immigrants are incompetent and undocumented. One male participant shared, *“I don’t want people to view all Latino immigrants as incompetent individuals because I know from personal experience that many Latino immigrants are intellectual and have contributed to the development of new programs.”* This particular participant showed a low-level of frustration and appeared concerned. Frustration with situations involving negative stereotypes and how it affects Latino immigrants was shared among four participants. Further, one female participant illustrated the importance of deconstructing negative stereotypes, *“The assumption that all Latino immigrants are incompetent can prevent them from finding a stable job where they are treated with respect and dignity: I don’t want that to happen.”* Next, the previous comments illustrate that participants share similar views, such as the importance of deconstructing negative stereotypes by repeatedly mentioning the negative consequences of negative and unreal assumptions. Another key message that was presented from the data was that the majority of the participants view Latino immigrants as competent individuals who can perform a job as well as people who belong to the majority group.

### **Hiring Process**

The second theme identified by the researcher was the hiring process, which consisted of three sub-themes: skin color, having an accent and mental health. Six participants out of nine indicated that Latino immigrants are often disadvantaged in gaining access to jobs from which they are educationally qualified. Further, they believed that employers choose employees with whom they identify, people who have the same skin color and values. Ultimately, participants identified this particular behavior as a malpractice. As a result, Latino immigrants remain unemployed for a long period of time and may develop mental health issues. Additionally, this data illustrates that participants believe there is a correlation between skin color and unemployment.

A male participant shared the following.

*“This happened a few years ago. I stopped at a store, there were three cashiers working and I asked if they were hiring because my son was looking for a job. The lady said ‘kind of, yesterday three Latinos came in looking for a job and were told that we were not hiring, but today, two Caucasians came in and were told that they could fill out a job application and are now working’ see, the supervisor was white and he gave the job to people that looked like him.”*

A female participant reported.

*“I know someone who spent close to a year trying to find a job, super overly qualified with a very strong accent, provided service to our country, but every interview he went to he was not a good match. Further, this Latino professional came across someone who knew him and knew he was a hard working individual, through that he was able to get a job; it took someone who knew him, someone who knew that this individual was skilled to uphold a job. Every time he asked why he wasn’t considered for the job he was told ‘we found somebody who was a better match’ he was always a finalist, but somebody else always got the job and who knows why.”*

The same participant shared, *“Even as a Latino professional when employers hear an accent they make comments like, ‘Oh your English is really good’ or may even talk in a louder voice and they give you this look like, ‘Are you understanding me.’”* She felt like denying job opportunities to Latino immigrants who have an accent is a form of injustice and inequality. Her

belief was shared among six other participants. One participant shared, *“Just because you have an accent does not mean that you have to be punished or exploited.”* The following comment was shared by a female participant who believes that Latino immigrants are viewed as untrustworthy. This participant along other participants felt like viewing Latinos as untrustworthy is a false assumption that can potentially prevent them from being hired.

*“Many employers don’t want to hire Latino immigrants because they fear what they don’t know. They feel more comfortable hiring Caucasians. They are in their comfort zone and make many assumptions without really knowing the Latino immigrant community. They may have the wrong perception of us. They may think that the Latino applicant has bad habits or may think that employees will feel uncomfortable because the Latino immigrant will talk in Spanish. Unfortunately, they fear what they don’t know because they have never been exposed to a person of Latino heritage.”*

A male participant shared the following comment.

*“Skin color is many times a mark against you. One of my friends who has dark skin color and black hair spent over a year trying to find a job. She had a college degree, but it took her a long time to find a job. My other friend who graduated with her was Colombian. She had light skin color, green eyes and was able to find a job within two months after graduating from college. I can tell you that they both were very brilliant and graduated with honors, but as you can see they were treated differently. The employer probably wanted to hire someone who looked like him.”*

Additionally, six participants believe that some Latino immigrants with an accent and dark skin color are treated unfavorably in the hiring process and are more likely to receive fewer job offers. Interestingly, three participants believe that not being hired because of skin color or an accent can potentially affect the mental health of Latino immigrants. One male participant identified low self-esteem as a consequence of experiencing job discrimination and shared, *“Employment discrimination destroys the self-esteem of the person. It can negatively impact their mental health.”* Another participant shared, *“Some employers make the assumption that because you have an accent you cannot speak as well as they do. This assumption can affect the mental health of the Latino immigrant community. For example, they are likely to develop*

*depression, which can lead to low self-esteem.*” These two participants were concerned that employment discrimination may affect the family’s well-being and the individual’s ability to function properly.

### **No Job Advancement Opportunities**

The third theme identified by the researcher was no job advancement opportunities for the Latino immigrant community, which consisted of two sub-themes: Latinos’ need to prove themselves all the time and diversity trainings for employers and employees. Four participants believe that Latino immigrants are “stuck” in the same job position for many years because the managers believe that they are not capable of upholding a managerial position. Additionally, they believe that Latinos are routinely channeled into positions requiring less customer contact and more manual work compared to Caucasians. The following quotes illustrate that participants believe that employers tend to think that white employees are a better fit for the more desirable jobs. Additionally, they believe that diversity trainings can potentially educate white employers about the richness of having a diverse workforce. A male participant shared, *“We need to help employers and people think differently by hearing others and setting up programs or workshops about the importance of diversity.”*

A female participant stated.

*“Employers need to know that they have to educate their employees about the importance of being culturally sensitive. They need to know that just because they are Latinos doesn’t automatically mean that they aren’t capable of upholding managerial positions or any other higher positions. I think that it would be helpful if the companies provide adequate diversity trainings. It would be also helpful if employers have Latinos in managerial positions and lead positions because there is nothing worse than being an employee and not seeing job advancement opportunities.”*

A male participants shared.

*“There are times when Latino immigrants get hired to do hard jobs that no one really wants, as time passes by these are the people that don’t get job advancement opportunities. Many times Latino immigrants don’t have job advancement opportunities because those opportunities are only offered to Caucasians”*

One participant shared, *“Good employers who provide job advancement opportunities will have less retention problems and employees will be motivated to perform an outstanding job.”* This particular comment alludes to the greater significance of treating all employees with equality in the context of providing job advancement opportunities. Further, this participant believed that all employees have the right to receive the same opportunities as any other individual who belongs to the majority group.

The next sub-theme was Latinos’ need to prove themselves all the time. Three participants believed that some Latino immigrants are not seen as an asset because they are usually seen as people who have to prove all the time. A female participant shared, *“Latino immigrants have to prove themselves all the time. Even at my own job I have to prove myself all the time, even though I have worked here for eleven years and have a masters degree I am not treated the same as other Caucasian employees.”* This participant felt that disadvantages occur because people with light skin color benefit from them. Additionally, a male participant shared, *“I feel like I need to prove myself all the time. Latino immigrants have to work twice as hard.”* These participants believed that they were unvalued and questioned by their supervisor occasionally. Further, they felt that their ideas and comments were ignored and unappreciated.

### **Low Wages**

The forth theme identified by the researcher was low wages, which consisted of three themes: inadequate safety training, fear to speak up, and the need to educate Latino immigrants

about human rights and labor laws. Four participants believed that some employers fail to pay their workers or to provide adequate safety trainings. The four agreed that there are times when Latino immigrants fear to speak up because they are afraid to lose their job. In addition, another key message that was presented from the data was that Latinos can gain the ability to overcome the fear if they receive accurate information about their rights.

A female participant shared.

*“A lot of Latino immigrants have shared that their boss did not pay them. In some cases, some employers pay half of the hours worked. Unfortunately, some Latinos don’t speak up because they don’t know where to go for help. We know that this form of discrimination is against the law. The labor laws protect all individuals regardless of their documentation status.”*

The same female participant believed that Latino immigrants need to be aware about their rights and need to know that they have a voice, the participant goes on to state, *“I think that by reaching out to the community Latinos can learn about their rights. They will be informed about the labor laws. If you know that employers cannot discriminate against you, you are not going to let it happen.”*

A female reported.

*“Some employers don’t give them breaks, they pay them below the minimum wage and don’t give them the opportunity to file taxes. They make Latino immigrants work sixteen to twenty hours a day. These employers are violating all the labor rules. I rarely see Latinos being treated well.”*

A male participant shared.

*“When I had a job back in college I used make less money than Caucasian employees and was doing the same job. But this happens because of discrimination against a person who is not white. Unfortunately, many undocumented and documented Latino immigrants are*

*experiencing employment discrimination currently. In a sense, things have not really changed.”*

A female participant shared.

*“They get very low pay. They start earning \$7.25 for doing 12 hours shift, heavy and unsafe work. It’s not fair. They are hard workers, most Latinos that I know have a good work ethic. They get up and go to work. They would rather work than get a hand out.”*

Additionally, the previous comments illustrate that the participants have a good understanding about the fact that some employers are violating human rights and labor laws. They believed that these employers show little or no interest in respecting the Latino immigrants’ rights, which increases their likelihood of working under unsafe conditions. It appears that participants saw a correlation between violation of human rights and unsafe work conditions. One participant shared, *“Many Latino immigrants work under unsafe conditions. Some people have burnt their hands because employers don’t give them gloves. There is not enough training. There is this attitude that well if I am hiring a Latino immigrant I can break all the rules.”*

Furthermore, four participants felt that some Latino immigrants fear to speak up when employers provide unsafe work conditions or when they discriminate against an employee in the payment of wages on the bases of race, color, religion, age, disability or national origin. One female participant shared, *“There is a lot of discrimination in Minnesota and so I see a lot of people with fear of being discriminated again. I give them information that is powerful and the fear goes away. Knowledge takes fear away.”* A male participant shared:

*“I think that if Latino immigrants experience employment discrimination they need to speak up and not be afraid. And there are always lawyers out there who are willing to listen. I have had a lot of people who have experienced employment discrimination and*



*have been able to get some discrimination to stop. However, I believe that there needs to be some education in our community.”*

In addition to the previous comments, the researcher identified that the participants believe that there is a great need for the Latino immigrant community to learn about the labor laws and human rights. As a result, Latino immigrants will be more likely to identify the difference between unlawful and lawful employer's behavior.

## **Discussion**

### **Sample**

For the purpose of this study, qualitative research was conducted. Nine Latino professionals were interviewed. The Latino professionals have worked directly with the Latino immigrant community. They have worked with the Latino immigrant community, experienced employment discrimination themselves or know Latino immigrants who have experienced employment discrimination. The interview, carried out in a semi-structured and flexible format, lasted approximately 45 minutes and was recorded to ensure accurate content analysis. Six questions were asked to each participant, which gave them the opportunity to analyze and identify the effects of employment discrimination. Based on the data collected this researcher has concluded that employment discrimination towards the Latino immigrant community still exists today. Additionally, themes and similarities were found throughout the nine participants responses.

### **Themes**

#### **Negative Stereotypes**

One of the major themes identified in this research study was negative stereotypes. Participants summarized that there are some employers that act upon negative stereotypes, which prevents Latino immigrants from obtaining a stable job. They concluded that negative stereotypes will affect Latinos' ability to succeed in the job market as well. The majority of the participants believed that there are some employers that make the assumption that all Latino immigrants are undocumented and incompetent, which prevents them from acknowledging the Latinos' strengths and abilities to perform and outstanding job.

Additionally, eight participants disagreed with those assumptions. They believed that there are many Latino immigrants who are ethical, skilled and intellectual. One participant shared, *"I don't want people to view all Latino immigrants as incompetent individuals because I know from personal experience, that many Latino immigrants are intellectual and have contributed to the development of new programs."* This particular participant showed a low-level of frustration and appeared concerned. This finding is congruent to Stewart's and Dixon's conclusion, which indicates that racial minority groups in the United States continue to encounter racial stereotypes and prejudices (Stewart & Dixon, 2010). This finding is also congruent to data from Dijker & Koomen, 1998 (as cited by Bendick & Nunes, 2012), which indicates that individuals will pay more attention to information from stereotyped groups.

Furthermore, four participants indicated that Latinos are seen as inferior by employers and other people who make negative assumptions towards them. One participant reported that racism leads to discriminatory practices and shared, *"Discriminatory practices have been going on forever and it's the bias, the racism. People make the assumption that we are all undocumented. I remember when I was in college people made the assumption that I was*

*undocumented because of my skin color.*” Another participant shared, *“The assumption that all Latino immigrants are incompetent can prevent them from finding a stable job where they are treated with respect and dignity: I don’t want that to happen.”* The same participants reported that viewing Latinos as incompetent leads people to see them as inferior. This finding is congruent to data collected from a research conducted by Morris and Williams (2000), which indicates that racism leads to discriminatory practices. People in society are categorized in groups with some being inferior to others. This often leads to the development of negative attitudes and beliefs towards racial groups.

### **Hiring Process**

Six participants out of nine indicated that Latino immigrants are often disadvantaged in gaining access to jobs from which they are educationally qualified. Further, they believed that employers choose employees with whom they identify, people who have the same skin color and values. One participant shared, *“This happened a few years ago. I stopped at a store, there were three cashiers working and I asked if they were hiring because my son was looking for a job. The lady said ‘kind of, yesterday three Latinos came in looking for a job and were told that we were not hiring, but today two Caucasians came in and were told that they could fill out a job application and are now working’ see, the supervisor was white and gave the job to people that looked like him.”* This finding was congruent to Pager’s & Western’s (2005) finding, which indicates that employers tend to choose workers with whom they identify or whom they regard as familiar. Under these conditions they generally expect White non-college job seekers to have large advantages over their African American and Latino counterparts. Concurrent to the traditional pattern of discrimination whites are systematically preferred to minorities. This

finding is also congruent to Bonikowski, Pager & Western (2005), which indicates that minority applicants are readily disqualified and hired more reluctantly than their white partners with identical skills.

Furthermore, participants discussed the difficulty faced when Latino immigrants have an accent. Six participants believed that some Latino immigrants with an accent and dark skin color are treated unfavorably in the hiring process and are more likely to receive fewer job offers one participant stated, *“I know someone who spent close to a year trying to find a job, super overly qualified with a very strong accent, provided service to our country, but every interview he went to he was not a good match. Further, this Latino professional came across someone who knew him and knew he was a hard working individual, through that he was able to get a job; it took someone who knew him, someone who knew that this individual was skilled to uphold a job. Every time he asked why he wasn’t consider for the job he was told ‘we found somebody who was a better match’ he was always a finalist, but somebody else always got the job and who knows why.”* This finding is congruent to data from Nguyen (1993), which indicates that immigrants fear that if they don’t speak like a native-born America, they will encounter difficulties in finding a stable job. For instance, a 48 year-old woman enrolled in an accent-elimination class after her managers complained that they could not understand her because of her accent. The woman suspected that the criticism was a pretext to keep her from being promoted to a higher position and shared that a speech evaluation clinic found her accent was easy to understand. This finding is also congruent to data from Bonikowski, Wester, & Pager (2009), which indicates that employers tend to hire white job applicants because they are viewed as a better fit for the more desirable jobs.

Interestingly, three participants believe that not being hired because of skin color or an accent can potentially affect the mental health of Latino immigrants. One male participant identified low self-esteem as a consequence of experiencing job discrimination and shared, *“Employment discrimination destroys the self-esteem of the person. It can negatively impact their mental health.”* Another participant shared, *“Some employers make the assumption that because you have an accent you cannot speak as well as they do. This assumption can affect the mental health of the Latino immigrant community. For example, they are likely to develop depression, which can lead to low self-esteem.”* This finding is congruent to data from Negi (2013), which indicates that Latino men who often experience discrimination and limited opportunities might experience mental health issues. For example, studies on the mental health of Latino farmworkers have found that this is a socially and marginalized population with heightened risk for poor psychological health (Negi, 2013).

### **No Job Advancement Opportunities**

Four participants believed that Latino immigrants are “stuck” in the same job position for many years because the employers believe that they are not capable of upholding a managerial position. They agreed that the most desirable jobs are closed to Latinos and open to Caucasian individuals. One participant shared, *“There are times when Latino immigrants get hired to do hard jobs that no one really wants, as time passes by these are the people that don’t get job advancement opportunities. Many times Latino immigrants don’t have job advancement opportunities because those opportunities are only offered to Caucasians.”* This finding is congruent to data from (Becker, 1957:31-64, as cited by Long, 1977), which indicates that the “etiquette of retail relationship” suggests that Hispanic workers will be denied access to higher

paying managerial occupations involving supervision of whites. Additionally, data indicates that Latina women are underrepresented in the literature review on management and career development. Recent reports indicate that 22.4% of Hispanics hold managerial positions, while 38.6% white women hold managerial positions (Hite, 2007).

In addition, three participants believed that some Latino immigrants are not seen as an asset; instead, they are usually seen as people who have to prove all the time. A female participant shared, *“Latino immigrants have to prove themselves all the time. Even at my own job I have to prove myself all the time, even though I have worked here for eleven years and have a master’s degree I am not treated the same as other Caucasian employees.”* This finding is congruent to a research conducted by Flores (2011), which indicates that Latina teachers felt that they needed to “prove” themselves more than other ethnicities. Latina teachers said they felt out of place and some even suffered social exclusion or isolated themselves due to work conflicts (Flores, 2011).

Furthermore, four participants believed that diversity training can potentially influence employers to offer a managerial position or any other higher position to a Latino immigrant. Further, they believed that diversity training can educate white employers about the richness of having a diverse workforce by reducing bias and increasing cultural awareness. A male participant shared, *“We need to help employers and people think differently by hearing others and setting up programs or workshops about the importance of diversity.”* This finding is congruent to information provided by Lopez (2007), which indicates that researches in the field of cultural diversity believe in the need for training employees and employers to help them gain a

better understanding about other cultures. As a result, employees will enhance their self-awareness skills and reduce their stereotypical attitudes.

### **Low Wages**

Four participants believed that some employers either fail to pay their workers or pay below the minimum wage, which violates the Labor Laws. Additionally, these four participants reported that Latino immigrants in the workplace must be given equal pay for equal work and discussed various cases of Latino immigrant who have either earned below the minimum wage or not being paid at all. One participant shared, *“A lot of Latino immigrants have shared that their boss did not pay them. In some cases, some employers pay half of the hours worked. Unfortunately, some Latinos don’t speak up because they don’t know where to go for help. We know that this form of discrimination is against the law. The Labor Laws protect all individuals regardless of their documentation status.”* This finding is congruent to data by Gray (2007), which indicates that farm employers manage workers vulnerabilities to ensure cheap, reliable, and quiescent laborers. For example, California is a state with a large percentage of Latinos and farm work. Farmer employers in this state use the phrase “no one else will do the job” or “I cannot find any local worker.” However, the reality is that farm employers encounter difficulties finding domestic workers that would take the low wages and arduous agricultural jobs.

Participants believed that employers who fail to pay their workers or pay below the minimum wage are likely to provide unsafe work conditions to Latino immigrants, which indicates little or no interest in providing adequate trainings. One participant shared, *“Many Latino immigrants work under unsafe conditions. Some people have burnt their hands because employers don’t give them gloves. There is not enough training. There is this attitude that well if*

*I am hiring a Latino immigrant I can break all the rules.”* This finding is congruent to Trujillo’s (2006) finding, which indicates that Mexican immigrants working in a clean-up following the Hurricane Katrina and recovery work found themselves physically and symbolically injured. Latinos workers believed that they were given more dangerous and risky work assignments. Unfortunately, foreign-born Latinos had a fatal working injury rate of 44% higher than the national rate in 2004 (Richardson, 2005, as cited by Trujillo, 2006).

Furthermore, four participants agreed that there are times when Latino immigrants fear to speak up because they are afraid to loose their job. In addition, another key message that was presented from the data was that Latino immigrants can gain the ability to overcome the fear if they receive accurate information about their rights. One participant shared, *“There is a lot of discrimination in Minnesota and so I see a lot of people with fear of being discriminated again. I give them information that is powerful and the fear goes away. Knowledge takes fear away.”* This finding was not supported by the literature review due to lack of research conducted on the importance of educating Latino immigrants about the Labor Laws and the lack of research studies explaining the causes that create fear among Latino immigrants.

### **Strengths and Limitations**

One of the strengths includes the qualitative research design, which required the researcher to apply a variety of theories and conceptual frameworks to analyze data properly (Padgett, 2008). In addition, the qualitative research design also required the researcher to apply observation, interpersonal communication and empathy skills. As a result, the researcher gave interpretive meaning to data. A second strength is that the design is unique in the sense that nine Latino professionals were interviewed. The nine Latino professionals had college degrees, such



as social work, business, education and law, which allowed the researcher to hear different perspectives about employment discrimination from a wide range of professions. Further, by exploring how negative stereotypes can lead to discrimination, the researcher hopes to bring more awareness about this particular injustice.

Limitations include the small sample of size. Although nine Latino professionals were interviewed, a greater sample of size would have helped to identify more themes and concepts. It cannot be assumed that those interviewed are representative of the greater population of Latino professionals. There might be other Latino professionals who view employment discrimination differently than the participants from this study.

### **Implications for Social Work Practice**

The information provided by the literature review and this qualitative research study reveals that Latino immigrants experience employment discrimination more than what we think. Further, this section will discuss implications for social work practice, addressing how social workers can effectively help deconstruct employment discrimination and how to deliver effective service to Latino immigrants who experience employment discrimination.

The social work mission indicates that the social work profession enhances human well-being and helps meet the basic human need of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty (NASW, 1996). If social workers review this mission, they will be more likely to become aware of the importance of empowering ethnic groups that have been oppressed, such as the Latino immigrant community. Additionally, the researcher hopes that by reviewing and upholding the social work

mission, social workers will become encouraged and motivated to develop educational workshops for vulnerable communities that are at high risk of experiencing injustices. The educational workshops will consist of educating immigrants about labor laws, human rights, what the term employment discrimination means and the effects of this unlawful practice. By providing this particular service, social workers will show their true commitment to the profession's mission and will enhance the well-being of the Latino immigrant community.

Furthermore, the researcher believes that social workers can deliver effective service to Latino immigrants who have experienced employment discrimination by applying their self-awareness skills, which can potentially help them identify their unconscious and conscious biases. By identifying biases, social workers will be more likely to treat all clients from different cultural backgrounds with respect and make bias free decisions. Additionally, literature indicates that professionals must be vigilant and recognize biases as they arise to help them work properly with people who have different values and culture (Ross, 2014).

### **Implications for Policy**

Literature review indicates that Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits any employment decision, including recruitment, hiring, and firing or layoffs, based on national origin. Additionally, no one can be denied equal employment opportunity because of birthplace, ancestry, culture, linguistic characteristics common to a specific ethnic group, or accent. Examples of violations covered under Title VII include: employment decisions, harassment and language (EEOC, n.d.). Although, Title VII mission is to protect people from experiencing discriminatory practices, findings from this study and the previous literature review indicate that Latino immigrants are currently experiencing employment discrimination.

In addition, the researcher of this study believes that there is a great need to critically analyze the strengths and limitations of Title VII and the laws enforced by EEOC. The critical analysis can potentially help to add additional components to Title VII and deconstruct employment discrimination towards Latino immigrants. The analysis will also give social workers the opportunity to reflect on how Title VII and laws enforced by EEOC serve populations at risk and respond to diverse communities. After the analysis, social workers will be able to identify and execute an action step related to addressing a social justice issue.

### **Implications for Research**

The researcher identified that there is a lack of research studies that address the positive outcomes that may result from educating the Latino immigrants' community about the labor laws. Additionally, the researcher encourages future researchers to investigate the outcomes that may result from educating Latino immigrants about the labor laws. The findings from future research studies may prove that educating Latino immigrants about these laws can increase their ability to advocate on their behalf, understand what employment discrimination is and decrease their risk of experiencing discriminatory practices.

The focus of this qualitative project was to examine Latino professionals' views and experiences on employment discrimination toward the Latino immigrant community. They have either experienced employment discrimination themselves or know Latino immigrants who have experienced employment discrimination. Six questions were asked to participants, which gave them the opportunity to critically analyze and reflect on the negative effects and causes of employment discrimination (Appendix B). Now, the researcher encourages future researchers to interview nine Caucasian professionals on their views about employment discrimination toward

the Latino immigrant community. By interviewing the nine Caucasian professionals, the future researcher will be able to compare and contrast data collected from this research. By comparing and contrasting data, the future researcher will be able to report the similarities and differences on how these two ethnic groups view employment discrimination. The data collected from the comparison process can assist individuals who are in the helping profession to develop effective interventions that can potentially deconstruct employment discrimination.

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## **Appendix- A**

# **CONSENT FORM UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS**

## **Latino Professionals' Views on Employment Discrimination towards the Latino Immigrant Community**

I am conducting a study about *Latino professionals' views on employment discrimination towards the Latino immigrant community*. I invite you to participate in this research. You were selected as a possible participant because you are educated about what employment discrimination means and its negative effects on the Latino community. Please, read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

### **Background Information:**

My name is Anali Crispin. I am a master student in the Master of Social Work program in the University of Saint Thomas. The study is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Karen Carlson, professor in the School of Social Work at the University of Saint Thomas. If you have questions later, you may contact me at XXX-XXX-XXXX or Dr. Carlson at XXX-XXX-XXXX. You may also contact the University of St. Thomas Institutional Review Board at XXX-XXX-XXXX with any questions or concerns.

The purpose of this study is: The purpose of this qualitative research is to bring more awareness about employment discrimination. It will also educate professionals, such as, social workers about the effects and causes of employment discrimination towards the Latino community. This study will also educate the Latino community about their employment rights under the Human Rights Act and Civil Rights Act. Furthermore, this study will also educate employers about their responsibilities under the Human Rights Act. Based on the study purposes a qualitative research will be conducted. Nine professionals will be interviewed. The Latino professionals work with the Latino immigrant community. The interview will be carried out in a semi-structured and flexible format, it will last approximately 35 minutes. The interview will be audio taped to ensure accurate analysis. In order to maintain an investigative research process, the questions will be neutral and open-ended in nature guided by the overall research question, and supported by literature related to employment discrimination. My general hypotheses is that these Latino professionals who work with the Latino immigrant community will confirm the presence of employment discriminatory practices. In addition, based on the study questions they will be able to provide information about Latino immigrants in the community.

### **Procedures:**

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things: Meet with me for a 35 minute interview at a convenient place for you. I will also ask you for permission to be part of an audio taped

interview. The information gathered on the interview will not be provided that will make it possible to identify you in any way.

**Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:**

There are no risks or benefits associated with this research.

You will receive payment: None.

There are no physically invasive procedures

**Confidentiality:**

The records of this study will be kept confidential. In any sort of report I publish, I will not include information that will make it possible to identify you in any way. The types of records I will create include, consent forms, audio recording, and transcripts. The signed consent forms will be kept for at least three years in a locked filed cabinet. Participants will know that the consent forms will be kept for at least three years. I will do an audio recording of the interview and a transcript of the interview. The transcript will be kept on my password protected computer and the interview will be recorded in my password protected iPod and my iPod will be kept in a locked file cabinet.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University of St. Thomas. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time up to and until *April, 2015*. Should you decide to withdraw data collected about you, the researcher will not integrate your previous information about employment discrimination towards the Latino immigrant community. You are also free to skip any questions I may ask. *You* can stop me at any time or let me know if you do not feel comfortable answering a specific question. If you decide to withdraw from the study, you can contact me at xxx-xxx-xxxx or meet with me at a convenient place for you. You can also email me at.

**Contacts and Questions**

You may ask any questions about the study at this time. If you have questions later, you may contact me at xxx-xxx-xxxx or Dr. Carlson at xxx-xxx-xxxx. You may also contact the University of St. Thomas Institutional Review Board at xxx-xxx-xxxx with any questions or concerns. You may ask any questions you have now.

**You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.**

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read the above information. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent to participate in the study. I am at least 18 years of age. I agree to be part of an audio taped interview.

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**Signature of Study Participant**

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**Date**

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**Print Name of Study Participant**

## **Appendix- B**

### **Interview Questions**

1. Can you please describe the age range and the ethnicity of your clients?
2. How would you describe your experience working with the Latino immigrant community?
3. What are some factors that contribute to employers not wanting to hire Latino immigrants?
4. How does employment discrimination affect the Latino immigrant community?
5. How do negative stereotypes affect the Latino immigrant community well-being?
6. What actions do you believe are necessary to eliminate employment discrimination?